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Growing Japanese Bonsai Trees for Bonsai Gardens

By Christopher Chase

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As you go through the history of Japanese bonsai trees (among others), you will note that this term is used to refer to a 'plant in a pot'. As per the information provided on Harvard's Arnold Arboretum site, "the ancient Chinese were the first to miniaturize trees for ornamental purposes, around A.D. 200. Later, the Japanese, who used it to create beautiful gardens, adopted the bonsai technique.

Basically, the bonsai are outdoor plants and they flourish in cool and humid conditions, away from the bright sunlight for most parts of the day. In case you want to keep them indoors, you have to create the same cool and humid environment for them; otherwise they tend to wither away.

Podocarpus, Serissa and dwarf Pomegranate are suitable for bonsai along with some common plants, such as Schefflera, jade plant, Ficus benjamina, Bougainvillea, Citrus and Hibiscus. You can also make bonsai out of several woody herb species like bay, rosemary, myrtle and lavender.

How to care for your Japanese Bonsai Trees

All bonsai need a light and well-draining soil, but the actual soil can vary from plant to plant. So, the soil mixture suitable for growing bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) cannot be considered ideal for cultivating the southern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*).

A typical bonsai soil mixture comprises 1/3 part coarse sand to help the drainage of excess water; 1/3 part organic matter like ground sphagnum moss or pine or fir bark, which are capable to hold moisture and nutrients and 1/3 part a coarse, fired clay like Turface that also has the capacity to hold nutrients and moisture. You can adjust the proportions according to the needs of your trees.

You can select any suitable place, such as the terrace to create your traditional Japanese garden. Planning an outdoor Japanese garden is an intellectual pursuit that also requires artistic visualization and imagination. The key element of its lay out and planning is that you should not let the gardener's personality influence the garden. In this way, the viewers can visualize the garden in their own distinct ways. Another core element is simplicity in terms of the design and lay out.

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Don't keep anything that competes with the décor of the garden or distracts the attention of the viewers away from the garden.

In your bonsai garden, you can plant clumps of *Fargesia nitida*, a pretty clumping bamboo. Japanese maples are also ideal and they can be transplanted into containers as well. In order to make your bonsai garden look more natural, you can put some moss over the soil beneath your bonsai tree that will look like real grass. To promote the growth of your bonsai, you have to rewire the bonsai every year and trim its center roots after one year.

Things to remember about Japanese Bonsai trees

When you see a bonsai, you must remember that it is a Japanese expression that refers to an artificially miniaturized potted plant or collection of plants, which are cultivated to recreate a natural scene. Generally, a twelve inches tall bonsai having an outcropping of strong roots can give the appearance of a very old tree.

Likewise, a symmetrical crown adorning the top of a straight trunk can provide the impression of a stately and ancient shade tree. The Japanese people possess centuries old dwarf trees and hand it over to the next generation as their living heirlooms.

About the Author: Christopher Chase is a respected Bonsai enthusiast. He is the author of dozens of articles on the subject of Bonsai, subjects include Shohin Bonsai, Bonsai and Suiseki and Bonsai Art.

Bonsai Trees

By Andrew Green

What are Bonsai trees?

Many people think of tiny little Japanese trees cut and pruned to a miniature size but literally speaking Bonsai means 'plant in a tray' and while they are smaller than their wild counterparts they don't have to be a couple of inches tall; they can be grown in a pot in the garden and will be smaller than their wild counterparts.

Misconceptions about Bonsai trees.

Many people believe that training Bonsai trees is a cruel pastime because the cultivator starves the tree and cuts it to such an extent that it becomes unhealthy. Quite the reverse is usually true; while they are cut and pruned quite heavily to keep them to the size of the pot, they are usually transferred from pot to pot regularly and are fed and watered much more often than their wild cousins.

Contrary to belief, Bonsai trees do not originate from Japan, but there are records dating back more than 2000 years that show Bonsai being grown in China. These Bonsai weren't as small as the Bonsai that people often envisage and were grown on an individual basis outdoors in pots. It was, though, the

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Japanese that took this art form and progressed it to the level it is at now. This has led to quite different styles in Japanese and Chinese Bonsai; the Chinese Bonsai being much more freestyle and more lightly pruned than the Japanese miniature Bonsai that are very heavily groomed and pruned and look much more like miniature natural versions of the full sized versions.

Bonsai trees do not live shorter lives than wild trees. They regularly live for many centuries and are traditionally passed down from generation to generation of family. They lead nearly exactly the same length lives as their wild cousins and are often much healthier because of the attention they receive.

The advantages of growing Bonsai.

Not everyone has a large garden where they can plant numerous trees and let them grow as big as they want, and even those who do have large gardens still need to wait for many years before the tree becomes truly established. By growing Bonsai you don't need any more room than the size of your pot and because you only need them to grow to much smaller proportions it really is accessible for anyone who is interested in growing Bonsai trees. You can even grow them inside if you can recreate the correct conditions for the tree you want to grow.

Growing Bonsai trees can fast become an addictive hobby and requires attention to detail, foresight of how the tree will grow and plenty of time and care. You will undoubtedly feel massive satisfaction if you decide to grow Bonsai and are any good at it.

Bonsai HQ,

for lots of information about looking after your bonsai.



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